UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : J. Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

DATE: September 20, 1963

FROM : Burke Marshall, Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

SUBJECT: Hunter Pitts O'Dell

This relates to your letterhead memorandum of September 5 to the Attorney General, relating to Hunter Pitts O'Dell and the related prior memoranda. I appreciate your having sent copies of these to me.

This matter had been brought to the attention of Dr. King some time ago by me, but in accordance with conversations which the Attorney General had with Courtney Evans, it was not felt to be wise in view of the sources of the Bureau's information to state that I knew O'Dell to be under Communist influence or control at any time. I did inform Dr. King and two members of his organization — Reverend Andrew Young and Reverend Wyatt Walker — some time ago — that since O'Dell was believed by many people to have had Communist connections, his association with their organization was not in the best interests of the organization.

At that time, inconclusive steps were taken to remove O'Dell, and his job with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was changed. In response to direct questions whether I had hard evidence of O'Dell's Communist connections, however, I replied that I was not in a position to give any.

Following further conversations with Mr. Evans in June, however, I brought the matter to the attention of Dr. King very explicitly in my office on the morning of June 22 prior to a scheduled meeting which Dr. King had with the President. This was done at the direction of the Attorney General. Later that morning both the Attorney General and the President separately strongly urged Dr. King that there should be no further connection between O'Dell and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

ENCLOSURE

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SEP 25 1963 ENCLOSURE ATTACHED

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Dr. King stated that the connection would be ended. Thereafter, the Attorney General and I both received copies of the attached letter, dated July 3, 1963, from Dr. King to O'Dell.

[redacted]

I thought you should have this additional information for your file.

cc: The Attorney General
The Deputy Attorney General